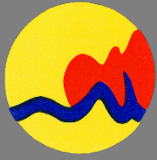


Strategic, Sustainable and Industry Aligned

The City of Grand Rapids has transformed technology support into a sustainable model that works for government.





City Profile

Customer:

City of Grand Rapids

Population:

193,792 (2014 Census)

Employees:

1,400

Industry:

Local Government

Budget:

\$473,131,000

Website:

www.grcity.us

Written By: Douglas Start

Like many cities, the City of Grand Rapids is facing a technology challenge; how do we leverage technology to drive efficiency into everyday business practice and enhance customer convenience and citizen engagement with overall shrinking budgets. The City supports technology integrations from mobile public safety and fire through general accounting functions. In short, the City of Grand Rapids is a medium-sized city with all the technology support needs of larger cities. Thus, the challenge; "How do you leverage technology in a strategic, sustainable and competitive way?"

Technology Landscape in Government

As the demand increases for citizen engagement, customer convenience, and operational efficiency, technology begins to play a key role. The way the City of Grand Rapids operates has transformed in the last 5-7 years to accommodate these demands.



City 311

The City of Grand Rapids implemented a centralized customer service center to better meet the needs of the population of Grand Rapids. The 311 Center has become the heartbeat of customer service within the City and the first point of contact with citizens. To be able to implement call tracking and agent scripts Microsoft CRM was deployed. When problems arise or an upgrade is required in the 311 Call Center, the City wants an IT support system that is responsive to these needs without drawing cost while sitting idle waiting for an issue to occur.

"I'm so glad we did what we did when we did it. Without the early evolution, adoption of our regional's technical talent pool and managing IT through contracting agreements, the City may not have had the ability to keep up with the needs to Transform IT."

**- Paul Klimas
IT Director**

iSaaS and iPaaS

In the IT world the trend is to implement Software as a Service and move systems and data into the Cloud. Access anywhere, anytime, anyplace, from any device has become common and expected, not just from citizens, but also from employees within the City. No longer do systems have to sit on premises and incur capital outlay and hardware support costs, however business practices still require that these systems talk to each other and share data. Integration Software as a Service (iSaaS) or Integration Platform as a Service (iPaaS) is needed to help drive the efficiency of having integrated systems and support the convenience of having them in the cloud. The City needed an IT support system that understands this trend and has the talent to be able to implement integration solutions as they arrive.

A Deep and Diverse Talent Pool

For decades, the City had onsite support staff with over 40 people at its peak. As more and more specialties evolved, deeper and deeper experience was needed. The pace of technical evolution and needs of the City continued to expand. Even for these experienced professionals it was hard to keep up with the pace of change. The City found itself in need of highly specialized and even more experienced technology professionals.

Budget constraints compelled the City to move to a competitively bid IT Managed Services contract; still supported by on premise contract staffing, but with far fewer staff. The City had begun to leverage a great deal of the talent in the region through managed services contracts and building partnerships with vendors. In addition, the City had expertise on call nationally through support contracts to support all their core applications and frameworks.

As the pace of IT change grew – so did the region. The employment of technical professionals became so competitive – there simply wasn't enough talent, skills, and experience to go around. The City and its contractors in the region were now being challenged with recruitment and development of personnel, a nearly impossible task for a medium-sized City to compete with major employers like Meijer, Spectrum Health, and now Switch (local SuperNAP).

ITaaS Unintended



COST: 10% reduction in support expenses.

EXPERIENCE SHARING:



Dewpoint Staff brought experiences from other clients to the City, thus giving access to a wealth of knowledge.



MORE HEAD ROOM:

ITaaS allowed staff to be optimized and more available to departments and business units.



GROWTH:

ITaaS helped grow the City's Project

Why ITaaS?

The City's evolution into Software as a Service (SaaS) and Business Intelligence included mobile everything, cloud everything, interfaces and integrations, dashboards, digital office, and digital services online. The regional IT needs also continued to grow, with the demand for technical expertise exploding, and in a few short years the premise to remain 'sustainable' was in jeopardy once again.

Moving to ITaaS provided a lot of benefit for the City of Grand Rapids as it evolved technically. Service Level Agreements (SLA), opportunities for escalation, access to a deep pool of IT professionals, industry alignment, best practice focus, and flexibility to evolve with the landscape of IT needs were some of the foreseeable benefits of transforming from a managed services operation to ITaaS.

With nearly a decade of operational service requests and other performance metrics the City evolved its established Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) technology support operation once more – to Information Technology as a Service (ITaaS). The bigger question was, if engagement of ITaaS was going to work for a local government - Was it sustainable? Was it going to be cost competitive?

Transformation into ITaaS

An organization cannot just jump into ITaaS, at least not with any hope of success. "The shock of change within the organization would be detrimental. There would be a revolt and staff members would not know how to adapt.", according to Doug Start, IT Manager for the City. The 'tyranny of the urgent' was the pervasive mindset when it came to IT support. Every user's issue was THE most important issue. The City needed to tip toe into the water, and had to ease the organization into the concepts of enterprise change management (ECM) utilizing their project management office (PMO), developing service level agreements to manage user expectations, and strategic planning with statements of work (SOW). All while keeping their eye on the goal; competitive, industry aligned, valued, and sustainable information technology support.

The transformation was done in three phases, refresh and transform, stabilization and as a service, as described below.



Benefits

- Increased Reliability
- Sustained Access to Skilled Support
- Diversified Talent Pool
- Industry Alignment
- Industry Best Practice
- Service Level Agreement Definition
- Measurable Outcomes
- Cost Effective

Refresh and Transform

This phase was a 4-year refresh of the City's core strategic frameworks, both hardware and software, to industry aligned best in breed solutions. This resulted in a core operation that could be supported by certified professionals from any outside service vendor. This phase also saw a shift to full cost recovery from the business units for IT operations and the maturation of hardware and software capital management. The business units had to be able to see what IT costs and plan for it strategically. This marked the closure of the 'Office of Dream Fulfillment' and a shift to a mindset that IT can do as much or as little as you can afford. The cost became real and value was defined.

Stabilization

Stage two was stabilization. This was the next 3 years and matured IT's operational best practices to be industry standard (ITIL) best practice. Audits in security, cost allocation and technical operation affirmed this maturation. During this timeframe, the City operationally addressed Disaster Recovery, SaaS and "The Cloud".

As a Service

The final phase in the transformation is "As a Service". The maturation to ITaaS has enhanced service delivery with defined and measured SLAs, depth of resources where a single FTE was available in the past, and seeing resource optimization around both technical competency as well as value.

Enter Dewpoint

Dewpoint was hired as a City Partner to implement ITaaS. "Establishing the defined performance requirements wasn't all that hard. We had all the metrics to set a baseline." According to Klimas.

The results of the first 9-months were outstanding! Operations were aligned with Service Level Agreements (SLA), staff recruitment occurred, and staff retention stabilized. The resources Dewpoint began to be leveraged with other Dewpoint clients – improving utilization and creating a deeper well of expertise.

City of Grand Rapids' IT model is once again stable. The City, in partnership with Dewpoint, has created a strategic, sustainable, and reliable model for IT support that will evolve with time. The partnership with Dewpoint is providing benefits and keeping pace with technology.

IT SUPPORT AND SKILL SETS

A Case Study in Elections

On November 8th a large number of voters showed up to vote for the national and state election. The City Clerk's Office needed support in using Microsoft CRM to create service messages, reports and CRM dashboards for staff members to use in managing labor and supply calls.

During past elections, this was a manual process. IT Support members from Dewpoint could bring the Clerk's two-year vision of having data tracked, reported on, used to effectively process supplies and labor issues into a reality.

Beware the Sticky Middle

How do we address the 'Sticky Middle'? The DMZ where it is not owned by IT because it's not operational, but at the same time it's not owned by the business unit because it is not a business unit function. This is where "I'm not a subject matter expert" comes to wrestle with "I'm not technical". The land of governance, best practice, and evolution of software that is home to the User Group.

The development of the user group is the progression of the organization from "I do what I am told" into "This is what we should do". User groups must be empowered by IT and guided in the art of governance and best practice. The user group controls the when and why of upgrades, the feature requests, the module add-ons, and the value proposition of a piece of software or product.

Each user group has a chairperson and the chairperson should be considered a user of the software. The user group should also contain a system administrator from IT that is responsible for actual backups, upgrades, migrations and software environments (development and production). The remainder of the group should be made of people who use the software and understand the processes of their business unit (BU) well enough to improve the processes. The group should meet as needed, have an agenda, and include a process of review and revision of governance and practice.

This is where the City of Grand Rapids is now. The empowerment of the user and technically positioned to adapt to changes as they appear on the horizon.